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ABSTRACT

This study explored the development of action research among 250 Korean elementary school teachers. Surveys examined their perceptions of the extent to which they conducted action research, problems encountered, benefits obtained, utilization of results, conditions required to conduct action research, ideal uses of action research results, and perceptions of traditional and new approaches to action research encouraged by Korea's Department of Education. Results indicated that 77.3 percent of teachers had no experience with action research. Teachers with research experience had over 5 years of teaching experience. Many teachers did research to get pay raises or promotions, but many others did so for intrinsic reasons. Most researchers conducted individual research. Problems encountered included lack of research ability, lack of related materials, and lack of time. Benefits included attainment of self-confidence, development of new theories, and professional development. About half of the teachers implemented research results, and about half shared results with colleagues. More than half intended to do action research again. Most teachers believed that collaborative research was the ideal, though there was a wide gap between the actual and the ideal. Teachers perceived improvement of professional ability, spare time to do research, and school climate favoring research as conditions needed for action research. They believed that action research should be used to improve school practice. Teachers favored the Department of Education's new approach to action research. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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ED 436 492

Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Action Research in Korea[1]

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I. Introduction

In the education reform preparing for the new millenium, teachers are empowered to take part in the decision-making process in the school. So the improvement of teachers professional competence is needed for the informed decision-making and quality implementation. And as a means of improving teachers' instructional and professional competence, action research tends to be emphasized recently in many countries.

Action research aims to help practitioners investigate the connections between their own theories of education and their everyday educational practices, to help integrate the research act into the educational setting so that research can play a direct and immediate role in the improvement of practice, and to overcome the distance between researchers and practitioners by assisting practitioners to become researchers.

Action research can be done individually or collaboratively depending on the theme of research and situation. But generally as collaborative learning is encouraged for students, so is it for teachers. And recently Department of Education has been encouraging collaborative work among teachers.

In this study the development and trends of action research are explored, the present situation of action research in Korea is described, and based on them and the result of survey, elementary teachers' perceptions of action research and its development directions are explored. The specific research questions are as follows.
First, What are the teachers' perceptions of the actual conditions of action research like?

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1. To what extent is action research conducted by elementary teachers?
2. What are the problems encountered and benefits obtained from conducting action research?
3. To what extent is the result of action research utilized?

Second, What are teachers' perceptions of the ideal conditions of action research like?

1. What are the conditions required to conduct action research?
2. What are the ideal uses of the result of action research?

Third, What are the teachers' perceptions of the traditional and new approach to action research encouraged by Department of Education recently?

II. Action Research: Its Development and Trends

The roots of action research are traced to the Science in Education Movement, which gave rise to the application of the scientific method to curriculum development (McKernan, 1989). It was in 1929 when Buckingham wrote a book *Research for Teachers* in which there was a chapter headed "The Teacher as Research Worker." Then John Dewey (1929, 1938) pursued the theme "researching teacher" and argued that curriculum would be effective when those engaged in teaching actively participate.

Though it is argued that the term *action research* was invented by John Collier, the U.S. Commissioner for Indian Affairs in the 1930s, most commentators agree that Kurt Lewin, the social psychologist, deserves the title of the father of action research. He perceived action research as a form of research that could relate experimental approach of social science to programs of social action in response to major social problems of the day. He also democratized social research by encouraging its "subjects" to take a central role in its formulation and execution.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s action research entered the educational arena through the efforts of Stephen Corey and Hilda Taba in the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University. The institute engaged in curriculum development for social reconstruction and cooperative research with teachers, schools, and school districts. Corey and his colleagues argued that action research would succeed because practitioners would utilize the result of their own research.

But in America in the early 1950s the decline of interest in action research began for the following reasons (Kemmis et. al., 1982).

1. A "retreat to the academy" by researchers(thus separating action from research)
2. An attack on its methodology (it was said to lack of vigor)

3. A questioning of whether it lived up to its promises concerning improvements of school practices
4. The rise of the competitive, empire-building, and positivistic evaluation industry.

In the 1960s and 1970s action research was discovered and promoted in England. It first surfaced within the Education Priority Area(EPA) movement in the 1960s when researchers were placed in socially disadvantaged schools to help teachers with their action-oriented problems, and then became a theme of a major educational conference held at York University in 1970. One of the conference participants, Lawrence Stenhouse put together a new synthesis of ideas that later emerged in the middle of 1970s in the teacher-as-researcher movement

In the late 1970s and early 1980s action research reappeared in America in the form of interactive teaching and research, and revolved around three research projects concerning collaborative action research sponsored by the National Institute of Education, i.e., the Interactive Research and Development on Teaching(IR&DT) Study (Tikunoff, Ward, & Griffin, 1979), the Interactive Research and Development on Schooling(IR&DS) Study (Griffin, Lieberman, & Jacullo-Noto, 1983) and the Action Research on Change in Schools(ARCS) Project (Oja & Pine,1982), which were premised on three assumptions.

1. School-based problem-solving approaches to curriculum change are more likely to be successfully implemented than large, federally funded, central initiatives.
2. It was important, as Lieberman and Miller (1984) have pointed out, to rediscover action research and to rename it "interactive research and development".
3. Collaboration (between insiders and outsiders) is crucial.

The collaborative partnership for internal development must involve those who are internal to the situation and external support agents. Such collaboration rests on a team approach, with participants taking ownership by defining their problems. Lieberman(1986) emphasized that such collaborative research is a question of "working with, not working on."

During the 1980s Stephen Kemmis, along with his colleagues at Deakin University in Australia contributed to the growth of action research. His work has focused on a critical interpretive approach to action research and has overlaid the messages of Lewin and Corey with critical theory largely from Habermas.

Since the middle of 1980s collaborative action research, ie., collaborative inquiry

has flourished. There is a growing interest in the learning school which is similar to Schaefer's "school as a center of inquiry". That is what a school should be like to foster the learning of students. Action research is participative both in learning and action, which is fostered by a sense of community, is rooted in the real world, and is attuned to the rhythms of schooling. Slavin(1987) has referred to a small but growing number of elementary and secondary schools" in the America that

> have begun to apply cooperative principles at the school as well as the classroom level, involving teachers in cooperative planning, peer coaching, and team teaching, with these activities directed toward effective implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom. Many of these schools are working toward institutionalization of cooperative principles as the focus of school renewal...Students, teachers, and administrators can work cooperatively to make the school a better place for working and learning.

In England action research has permeated the educational system, and action research work ranges from the inquiries of individual teachers into their own practice to shared work by groups of teachers, from work focused on the analysis of contradictions in practitioners' own theories and practices to work more critically relating these to wider social, cultural, and political trends, and from work informed by practical and interpretive views of social science and its possibilities for professional development to work more closely allied with reflexive sociology and critical theory.

Action research has become a worldwide movement. And there are many views about it. But there are two main contemporary schools of action research, one is based on the critical social science and the other is based on ideas about practical reasoning and the "the reflective practitioner".

The former is the view of a group at Deakin University in Australia. It emphasizes the connection between (1) the individual and the social (the social construction of social realities and practices) in the practice of action research and in the practice of education, (2) the cognitive (practitioners' ideas) and the theoretical, and (3) theory and method in action research practice (the role of action research as a systematic social practice that provides a way of formulating and attacking educational research problems in an educational and social context). The latter was influenced by Schwab's(1969) ideas about practical reasoning, Schon's(1983) idea about "the reflective practitioner", concerns to recognize and develop teachers' craft knowledge, teacher educators committed to exploring action research in pre-service and in-service teacher

education(Zeichner and Liston, 1987).

The following are the key points of action research (Kemmis, 1997).

1. Action research is an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences of changes.
2. Action research develops through a self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting, and then replanning, further implementation, observing and reflecting. It is a systematic process in which people act deliberately, though remaining open to surprises and responsive to opportunities.
3. Action research is participatory. It is a research through which people work toward the improvement of their own practices.
4. Action research is collaborative. It involves those responsible for action in improving it, widening the collaborating group from those most directly involved to as many as possible of those affected by the practices concerned. It establishes self-critical communities of people participating and collaborating in all phases of the research process.
5. Action research involves people in theorizing about their practices being inquisitive about circumstances, action, and consequences, and coming to understand the relationships between circumstances, action and consequence in their work and lives.
6. Action research requires that people put their practices, ideas, and assumptions about institutions to the test by finding out whether there is compelling evidence that could convince them that their previous practices, ideas, and assumptions were false or /and incoherent.
7. Action research is open-minded about what counts as evidence or data, but it always involves keeping records, and collecting and analyzing evidence about the contexts, commitments, conduct and consequences of the actions and interactions being investigated. It involves keeping a personal journal recording progress in, and reflections about, two parallel sets of learnings, that is, learnings about the practices being studied, and learnings about the process of studying them (the action research process itself).
8. Action research allows participants to build records of their improvements, that is, (1) records of changes in activities and practices, (2) records of changes in the language and discourse in which practices are described, explained, and justified; (3) records of changes in the social relationships and

forms of organization which characterize and constrain practices; and (4) records of change and development in the action research process itself. It thus allows participants to provide reasoned justifications of their educational work because it allows them to show how evidence and reflection have provided a basis for developed, tested, and critically examined rationale for what is being done.

9. Action research starts small. It normally begins with small changes which even a single person can try, and works toward more extensive changes, that is, with small cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting which can help to define issues, ideas, and assumptions more clearly so that those involved can define more powerful questions for themselves as their work progresses. And it begins with small groups of collaborators at the beginning, but widens the community of participating action researchers so that it gradually includes more and more of those involved in and affected by the practices in question.
10. Action research involves people in making critical analysis of the situations (classrooms, schools, systems) in which they work-situations that are structured socially, historically, and institutionally. Critical analyses aim to recover how a situation has been socially and historically constructed, as a source of insight into ways in which people might be able to reconstruct it.
11. Action research is political process, because it involves making changes in the actions and interactions that constitute and structure social life (social practices). Such changes typically have effects on the expectations and interests of others beyond the immediate participants in these actions and interactions.

III. Action Research in Schools in Korea

In Korea action research by teachers has been encouraged since 1950s mostly to improve instruction. Teachers do formal and informal action research. Informal action research is what teachers do personally to improve their practice. Formal action research has been sponsored by educational institutions, and simple quatitative research method has been prevailing. The research papers teachers present are evelauated and the result is used for promotion. This system has been used as an incentive to encourage teachers to do action research.

The following are the institutions sponsoring action research and the kinds of action

research sponsored by them.

Table 1. Institutions sponsoring action research and the kinds of action research

Institutions sponsoring action research	Kinds of action research
Department of Education	Collaborative action research
Korean Teachers' Association	Educational action research
	Educational materials exhibition
Multimedia Center, Korean Educational Development Institute	Educational software exhibition
Educational Broadcasting Station	Research on educational broadcasting
Educational institutions and research centers attached to the Colleges or Universities of Education	Educational action research
Department of Education in the province level	Case study on the practice of character education
	Research on the practice of specialty and aptitude education
	Ideas on open school(classroom)management
	Special research teacher system
	Action research on educational policy

Recently in Korea new approaches to action research emerged as ways to reform education. First, School-University partnership and collaborative work between teachers and teacher educators emerged. In Inchon National University of Education 9 teacher educators and 12 teachers have been collaborating for models of teaching and reflective student teaching program in a three year project. In this project collaborative action research is emphasized during student teaching with the ultimate goal of producing moral craftsperson(Yoon, 1998). Second, since 1998 Department of Education has supported collaborative action research by teachers, which shows that teachers have begun to be thought of as those who can solve educational problems with information from action research rather than those who are the cause of problems that impede educational reform. Third, qualitative research method has begun to be included in action research. To date most of the qualitative action research papers are produced at the graduate school level. Recently theses where teacher-researchers developed curriculum materials using various qualitative methods and spending more than a year were written(Sin, 1999; Seo, 1999). In this paper, new trend of action research is restricted to the collaborative action research supported by Department of Education. It is new in terms of (1) emphasizing collaboration among teachers, (2) providing financial support for collaborative work, (3) not relating the work with promotion.

These days action research in Korea is based (1) on the ideas of practical reasoning and reflective practitioners, (2) on concerns to recognize and develop teachers' craft knowledge, (3) on the desire of university educational researchers to employ field methods that engage teachers in research for their own professional development, and recently (4) on teacher educators committed to exploring action research in pre-service and in-service teacher education with the idea that teachers should be empowered and regarded as those who can solve educational problems.

In pre-service education student teachers have done case studies mostly on students with disciplinary problems since 1950s. Recently in a project on School-University partnership in Inchon National University of Education, student teachers do action research about their classroom practice based on the cycle of planning, acting, observing, reflecting.

IV. Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of the Action Research

1. Subjects, Research Instrument, Research Procedure

Research subjects were 250 elementary teachers in 10 schools in Inchon and Kyounggi-Do area. An open-ended questionnaire was administered to 20 teachers in an elementary school in Inchon, and based on the result a questionnaire with 23 items was constructed, pilot tested to 30 teachers in an elementary school in Inchon, modified it, and tested it to the same teachers again. A satisfactory reliability was found(Cronbach's α = 0.85). The final form was administered between Feb. 8-9, 1999. 233 copies were collected between Feb. 9-11 and analyzed using SPSS/PC+ program.

2. Results

가. Actual Condition of Action Research Conducted by Teachers

1) Extent of Action Research Conducted by Teachers

As shown in <Table 2> 22.7% of teachers had the experience of conducting action research.

Table 2. Experience of Action Research

Items	Teachers N(%)

Teachers with the experience of action research	53(22.7)
Teachers without the experience of action research	180(77.3)
Total	233(100)

As for the teachers with no experience of action research, the main reason was that research was not done out of the necessity to improve practice(23.9%). These teachers seemed to be disappointed with their colleagues doing research to accumulate credits for promotion. As other reasons, lack of enthusiasm and concern for research(20.6%), lack of research ability(17.8%), and lack of time(13.9%) were mentioned. 9.4% teachers said that they didn't feel the necessity to do research, and the reason seemed to be related with the response that research was not done to improve practices.

Table 3. Reasons of Not Having Done Action Research

Items	Teachers N(%)
Don't feel the necessity	17(9.4)
Lack of enthusiasm and concern for research	37(20.6)
Lack of time	25(13.9)
Lack of research ability	32(17.8)
Lack of school support	1(.6)
School climate negative for research	9(5.0)
More formal than the necessity of the practice	43(23.9)
Not enough diffusion of the result	1(.6)
Others	15(8.3)
Total	180(100.0)

<Table 4> shows the distribution of the years of teaching experience of the teachers who did action research. Presently no teacher with the teaching experience of less than five years did the action research. 45.3% of teachers were with the teaching experience of 20-29 years, that is, between the forties and beginning of fifties, 29.4% of teachers were with more than 30 years of teaching experience, that is, above fifties and 18.8% of teachers were with 10-19 years of teaching experience, that is, between the thirties and beginning of forties. More than 90% of the teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 4. Distribution of Teachers Who Have Done Action Research

Items	Teachers N(%)

Less than 5years of teaching experience	0(0)
5-9 years of teaching experience	4 (7.5)
10 –19 years of teaching experience	10(18.8)
20 – 29 years of teaching experience	24(45.3)
More than 30 years of teaching experience	15(29.4)
Total	53(100.0)

As for when teachers did their first action research, 39.6% of teachers did when their teaching experience was between 10-19years, that is, in their thirties, 24.5% of teachers when they were with 1-4 years of teaching experience, that is in their twenties, 20.8% when 5-9 years of teaching experience, that is, between their late twenties and early thirties, and 13.2% when 20-24 years of teaching experience, that is in their forties. There was just one teacher who did in the first year.

As for the reason of doing research 41.5% of teachers did to get pay raise and promotion, 26.4% to understand, reflect, and improve the practice, 20.8% to find ways to implement educational theories. 7.5% to develop theories fit for educational practice. There was one teacher who did action research for the promotion of a colleague. More than half of the teachers did action research for professional reasons, but a little less than half of the teachers did out of extrinsic motivation.

94.3% of teachers did action research individually rather than collaboratively.

Table 5. First Action Research, Reason of Doing Research, and Type of Research

.	Items	Teachers N(%)
First action research	Less than 1 year	1(1.9)
	1 to 4 years	13(24.5)
	5 to 9 years	11(20.8)
	10 to 19 years	21(39.6)
	20 to 24 years	7(13.2)
	others	0(0)
	Total	53(100)
Reasons for doing research	Pay raise, promotion	22(41.5)
	Understanding and reflection on the practice	14(26.4)
	To find ways to implement educational theories	11(20.8)
	To find theories fit for educational practice	4(7.5)
	For a colleague to be promoted	1(1.9)
	Others	1(1.9)
	Total	53(100.0)

Type of research	Individual research	50(94.3)
	Collaborative research	3(5.7)
	Total	53(100.0)

2) Problems Encountered and Benefits Obtained from Action Research

As for the problems encountered during research, they were lack of research ability(35.8%), lack of related materials(24.5%), and lack of time(22.6%).

As for the benefits obtained for action research, they were the attainment of self-confidence(35.8%), development of new theories and professional development(22.6%), acquisition of reflective thinking habit(13.2%), and attaining credits for promotion(11.3%).

Table 6. Problems Encountered and Benefits Obtained from Action Research

	Items	Teachers N(%)
Problems encountered	Lack of research ability	19(35.8)
	Lack of time	12(22.6)
	Lack of related materials	13(24.5)
	Problems with the screening committee and/or supervisors in the institutions concerned	5(9.4)
	Lack of support of school and related institution	3(5.7)
	Negative attitude about action research among colleagues in the school	0(0)
	Others	1(1.9)
	Total	53(100.0)
Benefits from action research	Acquisition of new knowledge	4(7.5)
	Development of new theories and professional development	12(22.6)
	Acquisition of reflective Thinking habit	7(13.2)
	Attainment of self-confidence	19(35.8)
	Attaining credits for promotion	6(11.3)
	Increase of concern for the use of research result	3(5.7)
	Others	2(3.8)
Total		53(100.0)

3) Use of the Research Result

As for the use of the research result, 52.8% of teachers used the result, and 54.7%

shared the result with colleagues, and 52.8% of teachers applied the shared result.

The reasons why the research results were not used were change of the school and classroom climate, difficulty of implementation, lack of materials, to do some other research, too much paper work and teaching load.

Table 7. Using, Sharing, and Applying the Shared Result

Items	Teaches N(%)	Reasons of not using the result
Used the result continuously	28(52.8)	Change of school and class climate
Didn't use the result	24(45.3)	Difficult to implement
Others	1(1.9)	Lack of materials
Total	53(100.0)	To do some other research
Shared the research result	29(54.7)	Too much paper work and teaching load
Didn't share the research result	22(41.5)	
Others	2(3.8)	
Total	53(100.0)	
Applied the shared information	28(52.8)	
Didn't applied the shared information	7(13.2)	
Others	18(34.0)	
Total	53(100.0)	

54.7% of teachers had intention to do action research in the future, but 34% did not, and the reasons were mostly difficulty of implementation, lack of ability, no need to do it, and lack of time.

Table 8. Intention to Do Action Research in the Future and Reasons of not Intending to Do It

Items	Teachers N(%)	Reasons of not intending to do it
Have intention to do action research	29(54.7)	
Have no intention to action research	18(34.0)	Difficult to implement Lack of ability No need to do it
Others	6(11.3)	Lack of time
Total	53(100.0)	

To teachers who did action research, the most serious problems were lack of the use of the research result (34.0%), lack of teachers pure intention (28.3%). To the teachers who did not do it, they were lack of the use of the research result (34.4%), lack of teachers' pure intention (24.4%), and lack of researchers' focus on the practice (21.1%).

To the teachers with or without research experience, lack of the use of the research result and lack of teachers' pure intention were considered as serious problems.

Table 9. Most Serious Problems of Action Research

Items	Teachers who did research N(%)	Teachers who didn't do research N(%)
Lack of teachers' autonomy	1(1.9)	11(6.1)
Lack of the use of the research result	18(34.0)	62(34.4)
Lack of teachers' pure intention	15(28.3)	44(24.4)
Lack of teachers' research ability	2(3.8)	4(2.2)
Lack of researches focused on the practices	6(11.3)	38(21.1)
Lack of creativity and originality	3(5.7)	8(4.4)
Others	8(15.1)	13(7.2)
Total	53(100.0)	180(100.0)

나. Teachers' Perceptions of the Ideal Conditions of Action Research

1) Conditions Required to Conduct Action Research

54.7% of teachers who did action research and 70% of teachers who did not perceived collaborative study was ideal. 30.2 % of teachers who did action research, and 53.9% of teachers who did not wanted to do research with teachers in the same school. But 50.9% of teachers with the experience of action research checked others. They seemed to be those who thought collaborative study was better and ideal but wanted to do individual study.

Table 10. Ideal Type of Action Research

Items	Teachers who did research N(%)	Teachers who didn't do research N(100)
Individual study	18(34.0)	48(26.7)
Collaborative study	29(54.7)	126(70.0)
Others	6(11.3)	6(3.3)
Total	53(100.0)	180(100.0)
Teachers in the same school	16(30.2)	97(53.9)
Teachers in other schools	5(9.4)	15(8.3)
Teacher educators in the universities	5(9.4)	12(6.7)
Educational administrators	0(0)	2(1.1)
Others	27(50.9)	54(30.0)
Total	53(100.0)	180(100.0)

As for the best way to develop research abilities, to 35.8% of teachers who did research and 36.7% of those who did not it was the in-service education by the institutions which sponsored action research, and to 30.2 % of those who did action research and 291.4% of those who did not, it was in-service education in the school, and to 24.5% of those who did action research and 27.2% of those who did not, it was courses in the teacher education institution. Teachers with and without the experience of action research wanted to develop research abilities through the in-service education by the institutions which sponsored action research, in-service education in the school, and courses in the teacher education institution.

Table 11. Best Way to Develop Research Abilities

Items	Teachers who did research N(%)	Teachers who didn't do research N(%)
Courses in the teacher education institution	13(24.5)	49(27.2)
In-service education in the school	16(30.2)	53(29.4)
In-service education by the institution which sponsors action research	19(35.8)	66(36.7)
Others	5(9.4)	12(6.7)
Total	52(100.0)	180(100.0)

Teachers who did research perceived improvement of teachers' professional ability(41.5%), school climate favoring research(20.8%), reward system(13.2%), spare time to do research (13.2%) were needed. Teachers who did not perceived improvement of teachers' professional ability(33.3%), spare time to do research (28.3%), school climate favoring research (15.6%), financial support(12.8%) were needed.

Teachers in both groups perceived improvement of teachers' professional development, spare time to do research, and school climate favoring research as conditions needed for research.

Table 12. Conditions Necessary for Action Research

Items	Teachers who did research N(%)	Teachers who didn't do research N(%)
Reward system	7(13.2)	13(7.2)
Improvement of teachers' professional ability	22(41.5)	60(33.3)
Financial support	4(7.5)	23(12.8)
School climate favoring research	11(20.8)	28(15.6)

Support of the principal	1(1.9)	2 (1.1)
Spare time to do research	7(13.2)	51(28.3)
Others	1(1.9)	3(1.7)
Total	53(100.0)	180(100.0)

2) Ideal Use of the Result of Action Research

81% of the teachers who did action research, and 81.1% of the teachers who did not perceived that ideally action research should be used to improve the practice in the school.

Table 13. Ideal Use of the Result of Action Research

Items	Teachers who did research N(%)	Teachers who didn't do research N(%)
Using to renew teachers	6(11.3)	14(7.8)
Using to improve the practice in the school	43(81.1)	146(81.1)
Using for curriculum development	3(5.7)	16(8.9)
Others	1(1.9)	4(2.2)
Total	53(100.0)	180(100.0)

다. Perceptions of the Traditional and New Approach of Action Research

As for the traditional action research, teachers perceived that action research should be on what was needed in the practice, it should be implemented, doing research for promotion should be avoided, and working conditions should be improved to facilitate research. As for the new trend of action research which was sponsored by Department of Education, teachers perceived that it was helpful for teaching, not for promotion, financial support for the research was helpful, through collaborative work better ideas could be developed, there was high possibility that research result was utilized, and it helped professional development.

Table 14. Opinion about the Traditional and New Approach of Action Research

Opinions about traditional approach	Opinions about new approach
It should be the research needed in the practice.	It is helpful for teaching, not for promotion.
The research should be implemented in the practice.	Financial support for the research is helpful.
Doing research for promotion should be avoided.	Through collaborative work better ideas can be collected.
Working conditions should be improved to facilitate research (paper work, class size, financial support).	

Creative research is needed.	There is high possibility that the result is used. It helps professional development

V. Conclusion and Discussion

In the education reform preparing for the new millenium, teacher empowerment tends to be emphasized in most of the countries. It means teachers will have more chances to take part in the decision-making process about school governance including curriculum and instruction. So there is a strong need for teachers' professional development to improve the quality of teachers' professional performance than ever before. And as a means of improving teachers' professional competence, action research, especially collaborative action research tends to be emphasized anew recently in many countries.

In this study with the thought that collaborative action research is important to improve the professional competence, teachers' perceptions of the actual and ideal conditions for the formal and informal action research, and teachers' perceptions of traditional and new trends of action research which was restricted to the approach supported by the Department of Education were analyzed and development directions were presented.

The following were the results of this study.

1. Teachers' perceptions of the actual condition of action research were as follows.

   Results showed that just a portion of teachers did action research. 77.3% of teachers had no experience of action research, and the main reasons were that research was not done out of the necessity of the practice, lack of enthusiasm and concern for research, and lack of research ability.

   Teachers with the research experience had more than five years of teaching experience. 45.3% of teachers were with the teaching experience of 20-29 years, that is, between the forties and beginning of fifties.

   The time when teachers started to do research was distributed from 1 to 24 years of teaching experience. 39.6 % of teachers started when their teaching experience was 10-19 years, and no teachers started to do research after 25 years of experience.

   The major reason why many teachers did research was to get pay raise and promotion (41.5%), but there were many teachers who did for intrinsic reasons, that is, to understand, reflect, and improve the practice (26.4%), and to implement educational theories(20.8%).

   Most of the teachers(94.3%) did individual research.

As for the problems encountered during research, the most serious one was lack of research ability, and then lack of related materials, and lack of time. As for the benefits obtained for action research, the most beneficial was attainment of self-confidence, and then development of new theories and professional development, and acquisition of reflective thinking habit. To 11.3% of teachers it was attaining credits for promotion.

More than half of the teachers implemented the research results (52.5%). The reasons why the research results were not used were change of the school and classroom climate, difficulty of implementation, lack of materials, to do some other research, too much work and teaching load.

54.7% of teachers shared the result with colleagues, and 52.8% of them applied the shared information.

More than half of the teachers (54.7%) had intention to do action research in the future. 34% of teachers had no intention, and the reasons were mostly difficulty of implementation and lack of research ability, no need to do it, and lack of time.

2. Teachers' perceptions of the ideal condition of action research were as follows.

Most of the teachers in both groups, that is in the group with and without the research experience perceived that collaborative research was ideal. There was a wide gap between the ideal and actual. As mentioned above most of the teacher did individual research. Many teachers wanted to do collaboratively with the colleagues in the same school. The teachers with the experience of action research who checked others (50.9%) seemed to be those who think collaborative study was better but wanted to do individual study. 9.4% of teachers with the research experience and 6.7% of teachers without it wanted to work with teacher educators. It seemed to reveal that this type of collaboration was not prevalent

Teachers in both groups wanted to develop research abilities through the in-service education by the institutions sponsoring action research, in-service education in the school, and courses in teacher education institutions.

Teachers in both groups perceived improvement of teachers' professional ability, spare time to do research, and school climate favoring research as conditions needed for action research.

The teachers in both groups perceived that ideally action research should be used to improve the practice in the school (81.1%).

3. Teachers' perceptions of the traditional and new approaches of action research were as follows.

Teachers favored the new approach to action research supported by the Department of Education to the traditional approach. With regard to the tradition approach, teachers

perceived that action research should be on what was needed in the practice, it should be implemented, doing research for promotion should be avoided, and working conditions should be improved to facilitate research. As for the new trend of action research restricted to the one sponsored by Department of Education, teachers' perceived that it was helpful for teaching, even though it was not helpful for promotion, financial support for the research was helpful, through collaborative work better ideas could be developed, there was high possibility that the results were used, and it helped professional development.

As the research result indicated, action research was not fulfilling its authentic objective, and it became a means to get credit for promotion. Just a portion of the teachers did action research, and their main reason was to get pay raise and promotion. A large portion of teachers had no experience of action research, and the main reason why they did not do action research was that research was not geared to improve the practice. So action research should not be related with promotion and a new system where creative research is properly rewarded should be developed to motivate teachers to do research.

The result revealed that the condition needed most for action research was the improvement of teachers' research ability. Even to the teachers with the research experience the most serious problem encountered during research was the lack of research ability. And to the teachers who did not do action research, one of the main reasons they did not do research was the lack of research ability. So to enhance the research quality and stimulate more teachers to do research, research courses should be provided in in-service and pre-service programs. Taking the research result into consideration, systematic in-service programs need to be provided in the institutions sponsoring action research, in the schools, and in the teacher education institutions. Besides, school-university collaboration where the university becomes a flagship, helping the schools with research problems and encouraging collaborative work among teachers and teacher educators, can be a good way to reduce the research problems.

Action research plays an important role in school renewal. As mentioned in the research review and the research result, it helps teachers' instructional and professional development including curriculum development. So the research result should be utilized more systematically. Presently formal use of the result is very limited. Research papers which won awards are published by the Korean Federation of Teachers(KFT) and placed in the library of KFT and also that of Education and Science Research Institute in each province and large cities. But research result showed that informally results were utilized, shared and applied pretty well. But the ways to expand

the use of results should be explored. In America there are various networks of teachers sharing interests, where teachers can present papers and hold workshops, and teachers publish papers in the professional journals with practice orientation. These seem to be good ways to help teachers share the results, which in turn will help educational renewal.

In this research it was found that teachers preferred collaborative work, and that the collaborative work not related with promotion. When it is the general trend of the world that the collaborative work is emphasized even to the point that teachers' experience of team work is used as one of the criteria deciding the development level of teachers (Glickman, 1989), it seemed to reveal the sound latent attitude needed for educational reform.

In this research it was revealed that teachers wanted to do collaborative work with teachers in the same school, and relatively small portion of teachers wanted to work with teacher educators. As mentioned above this revealed that this type of collaboration was not widely used. But it is the type of collaborative work, because teachers are more likely to realize the potential of action research if they participate in research partnership with trained researchers. Partnerships help overcome such obstacles as lack of teacher skill in research methods, a problem affecting even the teachers with formal training in research methods (Green & Kvidahl, 1990). So the ways to encourage collaborative work between teachers and teacher educators should be explored.

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Abstract

In the education reform preparing for the new millenium which is just around the corner, teachers tend to be empowered to take part in the decision-making process about the school governance including curriculum and instruction in many countries. So there is a strong need to improve teachers' professional competence for the informed decision-making and quality implementation. As a means of improving it, action research tends to be emphasized anew recently in many countries.

In this study the development and trends of action research are explored, the present situation of action research in Korea is described, and based on them and the result of survey, elementary teachers' perceptions of action research and its development directions are explored.